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Loose Woman

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Looking for another way back, we follow the trail past a swamp surrounded by pitch pine and briar patches. You see an abandoned tree house in a naked oak and can't resist climbing to the platform. You squirm out of your coat and hand me your hat and gloves: "I'm going up for a better view." I cannot help my caution: "You're not fourteen anymore," but you leave me, your silver hair blowing with the snow.

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Our daughter thinks we are here napping to the sound of snow, to our grandchildren playing with rubber dinosaurs and dolls, to the flickering light from an unwatched television. We lie on a double bed between a computer and bookcase. We look at our wedding portrait on our daughter's desk and wonder if it gives her luck or inspiration or whatever it is she needs and we remember that we are not yet too tired to make love. We keep quiet and when it is over, you drift into sleep, your hand warm between my legs. Now the snow is a tease. It melts before touching the ground.

Nathalie F. Anderson

Loose Woman

Just how promiscuous were you? he asked,
catching sight of my Bluffer's Guide to
Masturbation. A fair question, if
unanswerable—anything one might say
already weighted: thumb on the scale,
extra finger in the pie. Well, fair game—

like others of my kind, I used to
keep lists— the broncs I'd bucked, the fish I'd scaled,
the ones who'd kiss and tell. There was this guy—
met him in church, and shocked to discover
an atheist like himself—used to compute
weekly box scores, tallies, inventories

of all his favorite tunes since 1961,
and a mind like that will quantify
whatever it embraces. I confess
with some chagrin that I stopped counting
when the permutations proved me flagrantly
innumerate. So Freud found women dull

for all their perversity, their by-play
on the couch: all they dream about is love,
he whined. Nothing to puzzle out. My dreams
speak for themselves: all I dream about
is nuts: walnuts, almonds, cashews, filberts,
macadamias, brazils, pistachios—

all the pecans denied me since the
allergy set in. Don't smirk. I know it's
metaphoric. Still, for all he's got me
dead to rights, for all the id flaps
its semaphores, stool pigeon wagging
the body's tongue, I like how it changes,

deviance in the dumb show. It's like
switching to a bikini in mid-season,
the jigsaw you become provocative
to some, distracting to others. Fixated
on the piece he recognized, he told me
Love, I've got the picture. And did anyone

ever mention your blue eyes? I'll tell you
what I thought: not again. Where every married man
sees the wild blue yonder, the azure, the way
out of there, and every bachelor
the bone-rimmed blue pools at LaBrea,
the there to be out of. Still, there are lines

and lines. My favorite is the one at the
filling station, where I stood in a pool
of petrol back in 1974,
and he said—the nozzle slobbering
over the flank of the fender—Honey,
been pumping your own gas long?